

Report on the working of the Department of Mines and Explosives.

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Report on the working of the Mines and Explosives Department for the year 1924-25, received from the Chief Inspector of Mines with his letter No. 364, dated 18th September 1925.

ORDER No. T. C. 3558 67—GEOL. 11-25-9, DATED 24TH NOVEMBER 1925.

Recorded.

2. Mr. Bocquet was in charge of the Department till the 17th March 1925, when he was granted combined leave of absence. During the rest of the year under review Mr. Beckwith officiated as Chief Inspector of Mines. Mr. C. Suryanarayana Rao, Assistant Inspector of Mines, returned to the Department from his deputation to the Bhadravati Iron Works during the year. The administration of the Mysore Petroleum Regulation and the rules framed thereunder, was transferred from the Chief Inspector of Mines to the Director of Industries and Commerce with effect from the 1st February 1925. Certain amendments to the rules under the Mysore Explosives Regulation were issued during the year to bring them in a line with the amended rules in force in British India.

3. During the year under report there were 39 mining leases and 33 prospecting licenses current, as against 30 and 32 respectively, in the previous year. The aggregate area under the Mining leases and prospecting licenses increased from 42,275 acres in 1923-24 to 47,051 in the year under review. The number of leases current for gold and of the Companies which carried on work were the same as in the previous year, viz., 22 and 5 respectively. The number of exploring licenses was 3 as against 11 in the year 1923-24.

4. The Gold Mining operations were in progress on five Mining Blocks as in the previous year and were confined to the Kolar Gold Fields area. The total quantity of fine gold and silver produced during 1924 was 3,92,578 ozs., and 21,243 ozs., respectively, as against 3,81,059 and 19,024 ozs., in 1923. The total value of fine gold and silver produced amounted to £1,836,067 as against £1,755,465 in the previous year, showing an increase of 4.59 per cent which was due partly to the larger quantity of gold produced and partly to slight increase in its sterling value.

5. Outside the Kolar Gold Fields area, 9 Mining Blocks and 4 areas of prospecting licenses relating to chrome, manganese and kaolin were inspected by the officers of the Department during the year. Government consider that greater attention should be paid by the Department to this branch of work.

6. There were 21,851 persons employed in the Mining Industry during the year as against 22,485 in the previous year, the decrease being due to further general retrenchments on the Kolar Gold Fields. Of this number, 19,836 men were engaged in gold mining as against 20,604 in 1923. The relations between the employers and the employees on the Kolar Gold Fields continued to be satisfactory during the year under review. Steps were taken to prevent the chances of trivial accidents and to afford facilities such as ventilation, sanitation, control of fires underground, etc. It is observed that the method of timbering in stopes by the contractors, adopted in 3 of the 5 mines has given fairly good results.

7. The total number of accidents during the year was 216 as against 209 in 1923. Of these 48 proved fatal and 157 serious and 11 were non-mining accidents. The fatal and serious accidents thus amounted to 9.38 per 1,000 persons employed as against 9.09 in the previous year. The percentage of accidents due to negligence or recklessness, is lower than in the previous year, but there is an increase in the percentage of accidents classed as unavoidable. Government wish to impress on the officers of the Department that no efforts should be spared by them to minimise the number of accidents as far as possible by frequent inspections and the strict enforcement of the rules relating to the working of the Mines.

8. In the 48 accidents which proved fatal, 69 persons were killed or died from the results of injuries received, which gives a mortality of 3.16 per 1,000 persons employed as against 3.48 in 1923. Fatalities from rockbursts continued to be heavy of the 11 individual accidents involving two or more fatalities, 2 occurred at the

Mysore Mines, 1 at the Champion Reef, 3 at Ooregann, 3 at Nandydroog, 1 at Dalaghat and 1 at the United Steel Company, Limited, Shimoga. In the 9 separate accidents due to rockbursts, 20 persons were killed as against 15 and 31 respectively, in the previous year. The 2 most serious of them occurred at Mysore and Nandydroog Mines.

9. Ten fatal accidents due to explosives occurred underground, resulting in the death of 12 persons against 9 and 15 respectively, in the previous year. Seventeen persons lost their lives by falling down shafts, stopes, and winzes in 14 accidents.

10. The total premia collected by the Companies in the matter of providing compensation for injuries received in accidents was Rs. 46,513 and the amount paid as compensation to the injured people was Rs. 1,54,768, the excess of disbursements over the income being Rs. 1,08,255.

11. There was an increase in the number of cases of thefts, etc., of mining materials from 79 in 1923 to 94 in 1924. Two persons were prosecuted during the year for breach of the Mines Regulation and Rules, resulting in accidents, and both of them were convicted. Twenty-three persons were punished departmentally for less serious offences committed in connection with 19 accidents and 3 persons similarly dealt with in 3 cases for offences under the rules, but not resulting in accidents.

12. There was an increase in the number of licenses granted under the Explosives Regulation, being 859 as against 151 during 1923. Government regret to observe that the inspection work by the Magistracy and the Police of licensed explosives premises has not been adequate and leaves much to be desired. The attention of the District Magistrates is again invited to Government Order No. I. C. 1613-22—Geol. B-25-2, dated 7th September 1925 on the subject.

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